CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.873
17 May 2001

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-THIRD PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 17 May 2001, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Hu Xiaodi (China)

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The PRESIDENT (translated from Chinese): I declare open the 873rd plenary meeting and the second part of the 2001 session of the Conference on Disarmament.

First of all, I would like to welcome new colleagues who, since we adjourned in March, have joined our Conference as representatives of their Governments: Ambassador Khasbazaryn Bekhbat from Mongolia, Ambassador Toufiq Ali of Bangladesh and Ambassador Gustavo Albin of Mexico. We look forward to working together with them in pursuit of our common goals.

Esteemed colleagues, on our list of speakers for today's meeting we have the representatives of Turkey, Japan, Belgium and France. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Turkey, Ambassador Murat Sungar.

Mr. SUNGAR (Turkey): Mr. President, since this is my first opportunity to address the plenary under your presidency, I wish to extend our congratulations on your assumption of the presidency. I also assure you, Sir, of the continued cooperation of my delegation.

I have asked for the floor on behalf of my delegation as well as the delegation of Greece. I therefore wish to make a joint statement on behalf of the two delegations.

I am pleased to be able to inform the Conference on Disarmament of a recent step taken jointly by Turkey and Greece in respect of adherence to the Ottawa Convention. The information has already been conveyed in a letter dated 19 April 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Bulgaria, issued and circulated as an official document of the Conference (CD/1643 of 30 April 2001), which contains a declaration of the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, welcoming the joint statement of Turkey and Greece regarding the intention concurrently to become parties to the Ottawa Convention.

During the visit by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece to Turkey last month, the two ministers of foreign affairs made a joint statement on 6 April 2001, in which they emphasized the desirability of the adherence of all States to the Ottawa Convention and announced their decision concurrently to become parties to the Convention. The text of the joint statement reads as follows:

> "Turkey and Greece, conscious of the human sufferings and casualties caused by irresponsible and indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines, welcome the measures taken over the years unilaterally, bilaterally and multilaterally, aiming at prohibiting, restricting or suspending the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of the said mines and express their determination to do their utmost to contribute to these efforts. They also recognize that a total ban on these mines is an important confidence-building measure that would contribute to security and stability in the region.
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> "With these considerations in mind, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, Mr. Ismail Cem, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, Mr. George Papandreou, have emphasized the desirability of the adherence of

(Mr. Sungar, Turkey)

all States to the Convention on Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, namely, the Ottawa Convention. In this context, they have decided concurrently to start the procedures that will make both sides parties to the Ottawa Convention. For this purpose, while Greece initiates the ratification process, Turkey will start accession procedures. It is also agreed that the instruments of ratification by Greece and accession by Turkey will be simultaneously deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations in due course."

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Turkey for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Japan, Ambassador Noboru.

Mr. NOBORU (Japan): Like the previous speaker, I should like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the assumption of this very important post, and we pledge the full support and closest possible cooperation of our delegation.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform the Conference on Disarmament that a workshop on a treaty to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices was held in Geneva this Monday and Tuesday, 14 and 15 May 2001, co-hosted by the Governments of Japan and Australia. This workshop attracted broad-based participation and greatly benefited from the contributions of IAEA as well as several well-informed private research institutes.

This workshop was intended to contribute to deepening the participants' knowledge and expertise on the treaty issues and to developing their views on those issues as part of preparations for when negotiations start in the Conference on Disarmament.

The workshop was composed of three sessions, which were moderated by our three distinguished colleagues, Ambassador Luck of Australia, Mr. Kurihara of the Nuclear Material Control Centre of Japan, and Dr. Patricia Lewis of UNIDIR. A total of 13 panellists from a wide range of countries contributed to the discussions, and also more than 100 people participated as the audience and joined very actively in the question-and-answer sessions.

Now I would like to share some of my personal observations which I, as Chair of this workshop, believe relevant to the work in the Conference on Disarmament. The points I will now make, therefore, should not be construed as convergent views of the participants or anything of this sort.

First, the participants had an interesting exchange of views in the first session on the significance of the FMCT as well as general obligations of States parties under the treaty. Strong interest in the FMCT negotiations was demonstrated by the participants. I felt that the participants shared a strong sense of urgency regarding agreement on a programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament which includes the immediate commencement of negotiations on FMCT.

(Mr. Noboru, Japan)

The question of general obligations is fundamental to the treaty. Many participants have shown strong interest in whether the treaty should deal only with future production or deal with stockpiles as well. Some specific ideas were suggested as to how to deal with this question. I must say, however, that views are still divided on this issue. In order to find a solution to this basic question and in order not to make this issue a possible impediment to the start-up phase of the negotiations, we definitely need to show maximum flexibility and to look at the key concepts contained in the agreed negotiating mandate, the so-called Shannon mandate, from the long-term historical perspective of both arms control and disarmament.

Second, with regard to the verification issues which were discussed in the second session, the participants engaged in useful discussions building on past workshops, including the recent German-UNIDIR seminar held in March. One basic issue here concerns the scope of verification, namely, whether it should be a focused approach, a somehow expanded focused approach or a comprehensive approach. The key concepts in the agreed mandate would again be very relevant to this question, and a practical and balanced solution should eventually be found.

It was widely pointed out during the discussions in this session that several problems, technical as well as political, need to be carefully considered to make the verification system credible. They include the scope of declaration, the question of undeclared facilities, methods for accounting and the relevance of the IAEA verification system, to name a few. Since those problems seem to require very detailed analysis and consideration, continuous discussions by experts with a high level of expertise and sufficient knowledge are required. From this viewpoint the discussions among the panellists were found stimulating and provided a good basis for future work. The participation of more experts from a broader range of countries is suggested to further develop discussions in future.

In the third session, the participants first addressed the possible structure of the treaty, including the treaty-implementing organization and the entry into force of the treaty. This discussion provided them with a clearer picture of what the negotiations should aim at. With regard to the issue of the organization, a question was raised whether IAEA could be used or whether a new organization, which might be called "FMCTO", should be created. All these issues are important, although they can be appropriately addressed at a later stage.

Finally, the participants also discussed what the next steps should be in the process to commence the negotiations in the near future. It seems to me that the possible next steps presented by two panellists, to prepare for the negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament, were both interesting and merit further consideration by us here in the Conference. It is my hope that any further exercise of this kind will have universal attendance. It is my intention to compile all the papers presented in the workshop and make them available to those interested in this issue for reference in their continuing endeavours to prepare for the commencement of the negotiations.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Chinese): I thank the representative of Japan for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Belgium, Ambassador Lint.

Mr. LINT (Belgium) (translated from French): Mr. President, first of all, may I congratulate you on your accession to the position of President of the Conference on Disarmament. We wish to assure you that you may count on the full cooperation of Belgium in your endeavours to bring the Conference out of its current impasse.

I was very gratified to hear the statement of our Turkish colleague, which was significant both in terms of promoting good relations between Greece and Turkey and in the broader context of the universalization of the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines.

As of today, 114 States have ratified or acceded to the Convention and 140 States have signed, ratified or acceded to it. A further two States members of the Conference on Disarmament have completed the national ratification procedures and will soon be depositing their instruments of ratification with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

I would like to take this opportunity to encourage all States which are not yet parties to the Convention to ratify it or to accede to it at the earliest possible date.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Chinese): I thank the representative of Belgium for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now call on the representative of France, Ambassador de La Fortelle.

Mr. de La FORTELLE (France) (translated from French): Mr. President, in my turn, I would like to convey to you my congratulations and my best wishes for success in your presidency.

I have asked for the floor today in order, very briefly, to draw the attention of member delegations and observers in the Conference on Disarmament to the note dated 3 May 2001 which we have circulated in their pigeon-holes. In this note we inform them that the French mission to the Conference on Disarmament has launched a new Internet site, with the domain name www.delegfrance-cd-geneve.org. This site provides a brief presentation of the activities carried out by the French authorities in the area of security and disarmament, followed by their positions on certain security and disarmament issues. The Web site includes statements organized by institution and by topic. These statements relate to activities in which the French mission is particularly involved.

To judge by initial statistics of visits to this site, already numbering several hundred, it seems that it will serve as a useful facility both for delegations and the research community.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Chinese): I thank the representative of France for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Are there any other delegations wishing to take the floor at this stage? As that seems not to be the case, distinguished colleagues, before concluding our work for today, allow me, in my capacity as President, to take this opportunity to report in general on the consultations I have had with all delegations since the closure of the first part of our session and to give a brief indication of the next step that we should take.

At the very beginning of my term of office I indicated that, as President, I would be guided by the principles of fairness, impartiality and openness in seeking consultations and cooperation with all delegations to advance the work of the Conference.

Up to now, I have exchanged views with more than 30 delegations on the situation which the Conference currently faces and on ways of breaking the deadlock. Because of time constraints and other commitments of various parties, I have not yet been able to hold consultations with all colleagues. Naturally, I remain ready to listen to the ideas and suggestions of all parties.

On the basis of the relevant consultations, I wish to summarize for you a number of inconclusive views or sentiments.

First, all sides have manifested their concern and dissatisfaction with regard to the current plight of the Conference and expressed their strong hopes that the Conference will break the deadlock and commence substantive work at an early date.

Second, many delegations are much concerned about the developments in the field of international security and strategic stability since the conclusion of the first part of our session, as they will to a greater or lesser extent, or in one way or another, continue to exert an influence on what the Conference needs to do and whether or not it is able to begin its work.

Third, on the matter of the programme of work, all sides still agree on using document CD/1624 as a basis for further intensified consultations. The "Amorim proposal" is an option and there are also several other proposals suggesting amendments to it. As for these proposals, most delegations either agree with or go along with all of them, while there are a few differing views, which either firmly agree with a given option and are strongly opposed to another, or vice versa, thus making it impossible to achieve consensus.

Fourth, with regard to the next step to take, some delegations advocate that intensified consultations continue to be held on the main contentious issues relating to the programme of work, in order to seek a compromise that will be acceptable to all. Some other delegations suggest that more attention should be devoted to exploring relevant proposals or suggestions related to the complementary actions during the present "waiting period".

(The President)

Fifth, during the previous period, a great number of considerations, ideas and even specific proposals were expressed on both the programme of work and the complementary actions. Up to now, however, no delegation has formally requested me as President to seek comments from all sides on any specific proposal.

It seems that some ideas are still at the stage of deliberation and exploration, before being ready for formal submission to the Conference for action.

Distinguished colleagues, in view of the circumstances mentioned above, I will as President, within my term of office and on the basis of the work that has already been done, continue consultations with all sides and listen attentively to their ideas and suggestions, with a view to helping the Conference move forward in its work.

Notwithstanding the unfavourable overall situation and numerous difficult factors facing us, I hope that in this new, second part of our session we will all be able to find new ways of thinking and new positions, thus opening a new phase in our work.

I also wish to express my appreciation to all delegations for their readiness to hold consultations with me and for their cooperation in our joint effort to move the Conference forward.

Distinguished colleagues, with regard to our working arrangements for next week, as you are all aware, next Thursday, 24 May 2001, is an official holiday of the United Nations and the Palais des Nations will be closed. Following the established practice in such cases, the Conference's plenary meeting should be held on Tuesday instead. It so happens, however, that the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia, His Excellency Mr. Luvsangin Erdenechuluun, will be visiting Geneva from 23 to 25 May and has expressed the wish to address the Conference on Disarmament on Wednesday, which falls on 23 May 2001.

Following my consultations with various parties, members of the Conference have agreed to hold the next plenary meeting on Wednesday, 23 May 2001.

I would now like to give the floor to the distinguished representative of Mongolia, Ambassador Bekhbat.

Mr. BEKHBAT (Mongolia) (translated from French): Mr. President and dear colleagues, I thank you most warmly for your kind wishes and warm words of welcome.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my satisfaction and pleasure at being posted to Geneva and being able thus to work together with you in pursuit of the goals set before the Conference on Disarmament.

(Mr. Bekhbat, Mongolia)

For me this is a particularly happy occasion and a fortunate coincidence, since my Minister for Foreign Affairs has expressed the wish, during his visit to Europe, to address the Conference on Disarmament and to set forth the positions of the Mongolian Government on all the current issues in the field of disarmament.

I thank all those delegations who supported this proposal and agreed to receive the Minister on 23 May - although this is the eve of a public holiday - thus affording the Minister the chance once again to demonstrate the interest shown in Ulaanbaatar for this eminent multilateral negotiating forum, the Conference on Disarmament.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Chinese): I thank Ambassador Bekhbat for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair and, on my own behalf, I extend my welcome to him once again.

Distinguished colleagues, that concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting will be held on Wednesday, 23 May 2001, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.